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## University of Dayton Flyer Pitch awards \$137,500 in cash, support to promising start-up companies, inaugurates social venture track

University of Dayton

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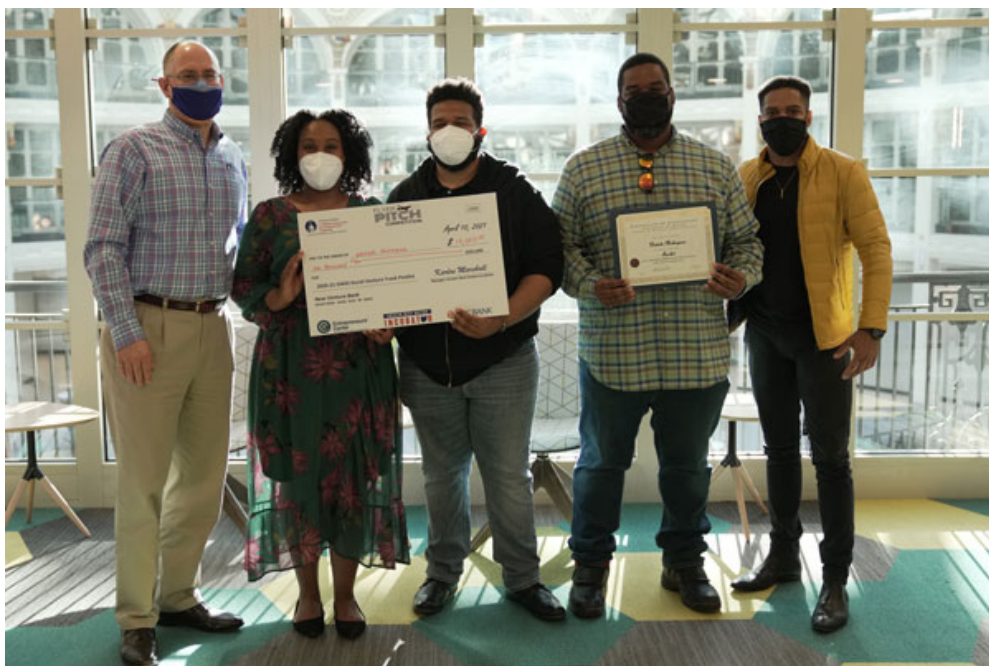
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# News

## News

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THURSDAY MAY 6, 2021

# University of Dayton Flyer Pitch awards \$137,500 in cash, support to promising start-up companies, inaugurates social venture track

The University of Dayton Flyer Pitch competition inaugurated a new era, announcing its 2021 winners April 26 in a ceremony hosted at The Hub Powered by PNC Bank at the Dayton Arcade, awarding \$137,500 in cash prizes and support, and adding a special track for boosting social ventures.

Sponsored by PNC Bank and the Entrepreneurs' Center in Dayton, the competition awarded the top prize in the startup track to illume Fit LLC, a device that allows endurance athletes to send emergency messages to predefined emergency contacts while training. illume Fit LLC was awarded a \$20,000 cash prize and \$25,000 of in-kind support through Ohio's Entrepreneurial Services Provider program.

Winner in the new Greater West Dayton Incubator (GWDI) social venture track is the Westside Makerspace, which took first place and a \$10,000 cash prize for its plan to create a West Dayton-based collaborative to spur creativity and new ventures.

"The social venture track was an ideal way to support social innovation for Greater West Dayton neighborhoods at the intersections of entrepreneurship and social justice," said Karlos L. Marshall, GWDI manager. "Collectively across both tracks we awarded \$65,000 to Black founders in the final round including \$35,000 to Just Cakin' It, a mobile dessert lab founded by a Black woman from West Dayton.

"We expect this competition to be a catalyst for closing funding gaps in our community moving forward."

illumine Fit LLC was selected from among more than 31 teams that pitched ideas during the competition, one of the largest at the college level. The team included Dayton community members Jack Randall, Anna Randall, Phillip Horn and Bryce McGuire.

"This year's group of startup track teams included some of the most entrepreneurial founders we have had in the competition to date. The judges decision to fully fund illumine's ask was based on the progress the team made over the last several months, and the overall opportunity." said Vince Lewis, director of the university's L. William Crotty Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership. "We look forward to illumine adding to Flyer Pitch's successful legacy, which includes 74 businesses and \$24.1 million of capital raised."

The inspiration for illumine Fit LLC came when Randall, a two-time winner of Cincinnati's Flying Pig Marathon, and a friend were running near UD's campus, and Randall's friend had a seizure. Fortunately they had a mobile phone with them; had this not been the case, the outcome could have been different. This inspired Randall to consider how endurance athletes can assure the right people will be notified if something unexpected happens during training.

"We are very thankful for the opportunity Flyer Pitch has provided our team," Randall said. "The funds generated through the Flyer Pitch Competition will help in progressing the illumine mission by allowing us to get one step closer to launching our minimum viable product. The funds will be utilized to finalize the mechanical and electrical design, initiate software development and lay the foundation for our future IP strategy."

Westside Makerspace provides accessible training, work and studio space, specialized tools and equipment and micromanufacturing services for West Dayton entrepreneurs. Team members Alvin Wilkerson, Cherrelle Gardner, Edwin Dirksen and Claude Nicol are UD graduates.

"We are excited to win the grand prize for the Flyer Pitch Social venture track. We started this project recognizing we live in a community full of talented people and with these funds we are one step closer to providing the resources to help members of the community flourish," Wilkerson said. "We believe everyone is a maker in some way and with the resources that the Makerspace will provide we hope to further highlight our community of creatives and entrepreneurs."

Wilkerson said the group of three engineers and a project manager started the idea with just a space where they could share their tools and ideas. Inspired by how Dayton's Gem City Market formed a community grocery store for West Dayton, Wilkerson and his partners expanded what they were doing with the help of Co-Op Dayton to share their space with others in the community.

The Flyer Pitch Competition is an annual competition sponsored by the University of Dayton's L. William Crotty Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership and the Greater West Dayton Incubator in partnership with PNC Bank and the Entrepreneurs' Center. Now in its 15th year, Flyer Pitch awards more than \$100,000 in cash prizes and more than \$50,000 in in-kind prizes during the competition.

Sixty teams competed for prizes in this year's Flyer Pitch competition. Finalists were awarded cash prizes and in-kind support. In addition to the winners, finalists include:

### **Startup Track**

- Just Cakin' It - \$35,000 - A mobile cakery and dessert lab providing culinary classes for youth weekdays using lessons in science, technology, engineering, entrepreneurship, art and math; and hosting cake decorating parties and other events on weekends.
- Petrified Good - \$15,000 - An online apparel business that sells repurposed clothing with unique designs.
- Healthy Family Market - \$10,000 - A healthy food choice market in West Dayton. (Bandila Arts branding and web package winner)

- Scattered Shop - \$2,500 - An online store featuring African diaspora gifts, home goods and clothing.

## Social Venture Track

- Black Doulas of the Midwest - \$3,500 - A nonprofit startup to provide doula services to African American women.
- Dayton Young Black Professionals - \$2,500 (community choice award winner) - A nonprofit startup focused on youth training and development.
- Gem City Recycling Empowerment Program - \$1,000 - An e-recycling company to empower and provide job training for those re-entering society. (Bandila Arts branding and web package winner)
- STEM Whisperers - \$500 - A workforce development program for underrepresented and underserved children.

For more information on Flyer Pitch, email [flyerpitch@udayton.edu](mailto:flyerpitch@udayton.edu). For more on the Greater West Dayton Incubator, email Karlos L. Marshall at [gwdi@udayton.edu](mailto:gwdi@udayton.edu).

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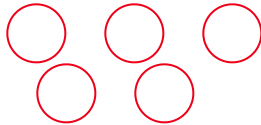
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